

Message Text

SECRET

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 5712

S E C R E T AMMAN 6356

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E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, JO, US

SUBJECT: HHAWK MISSILES

REF: AMMAN 6351

1. SUBSEQUENT TO SENDING REFTEL, RIFAI CALLED ME BACK IN HIGH DUDGEON. HE SAID THAT WHEN HE SPOKE TO ME HE HAD NOT SEEN ALL THE PRESS REPORTS EMANATING FROM THE STATES SAYING THAT US OFFICIAL SOURCES WERE INDICATING THAT JORDAN WAS ACCEPTING ALL OF THE US CONDITIONS. HE SAID UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES THEY WOULD HAVE TO ISSUE A STATEMENT OF THEIR OWN AND HE WAS GOING TO GO AHEAD AND DO THIS.

2. I TOLD HIM THAT WHAT HE READ IN PRESS REPORTS DID NOT REFLECT OUR AGREEMENT ON WHAT OUR OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN WOULD SAY. THIS HAD BEEN KEPT TO THE LETTER. I HAD GIVEN HIM A FULL READ OUT EARLIER THIS MORNING ON EXACTLY WHAT OUR PRESS SPOKESMAN HAD INDICATED. IN THIS CASE HE HAD NOT GONE AS FAR AS THE SECRETARY'S LETTER TO RIFAI HAD INDICATED WE WOULD, MERELY STATING THAT CONSIDERATIONS IN THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER WOULD BE THE BASIS FOR OUR GOING ON.

3. RIFAI REPLIED THAT THESE KINDS OF NEWS STORIES ARE KILLING US AND THAT THE ISRAELIS THEMSELVES ARE NOW STATING THERE HAS BEEN A SECRET AGREEMENT ON THE PART

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OF JORDAN TO ABIDE BY ALL THE CONDITIONS.

4. I URGED RIFAI NOT TO UPSET THE PRESENT DELICATE SET OF ARRANGEMENTS BY ISSUING ANY STATEMENT AT ALL HERE IN JORDAN. I TOLD HIM THAT I HAD JUST SENT A CABLE TO WASHINGTON ASKING THEM ONCE AGAIN TO URGE CASE AND BINGHAM TO MAKE NO STATEMENT ON THE BASIS OF HIS COMMITMENT TO ME THAT HE WOULD NOT MAKE A STATEMENT HERE.

5. AS WE TALKED RIFAI DREW BACK FROM THE IDEA OF MAKING A STATEMENT BUT SAID THERE MIGHT BE STORIES TOMORROW IN THE LOCAL PRESS, WITHOUT REPEAT WITHOUT ANY REFERENCE TO JORDANIAN OFFICIAL SOURCES WHICH REITERATED IN EFFECT THE POINTS WHICH WERE MADE IN THEIR PUBLIC STATEMENT OF SEPTEMBER 18. I SAID THIS WOULD NOT BE A HAPPY CIRCUMSTANCE AND URGED HIM TO AVOID IT. HE SAID HE DID NOT SEE HOW HE COULD NOT GO AT LEAST THIS FAR WHEN THERE WERE PRESS REPORTS COMING FROM THE US, SOURCED TO UNNAMED AMERICAN OFFICIALS, WHICH CONTAINED SUCH STATEMENTS. HE REPEATED AGAIN THAT HE WOULD NOT SOURCE THE REPORTS TO JORDANIAN OFFICIALS, BUT PRESS WOULD

MERELY INDICATE "IT HAS BEEN LEARNED" WITH THE STORY FOLLOWING. HE ALSO INDICATED THAT HE WOULD NOT DO THIS BEFORE THE LOCAL PRESS IS PUBLISHED TOMORROW AND WOULD NOT CARRY IT TODAY ON OFFICIAL TV OR RADIO. I SAID AGAIN I HOPED AT ALL COST WE COULD AVOID ANY STATEMENT. HE REPEATED HE COULD NOT GIVE ME A GUARANTEE THAT THE LOCAL PRESS WOULD NOT CONTAIN ARTICLES WHICH WILL BE A REPLY TO THE PRESS STORIES APPEARING IN THE STATES, BUT THAT HE WOULD MAKE NO OFFICIAL STATEMENT ON THIS SUBJECT.

6. I AM NOT FROM HERE IN A POSITION TO JUDGE WHAT DAMAGE WOULD BE CAUSED BY A LOCAL NEWSPAPER PRINTING SUCH A STORY. THE STORY IS PROBABLY LIKELY TO BE PICKED UP BY OFFICIAL RADIO AND TV AND REBROADCAST, SOURCED TO A LOCAL NEWSPAPER. (THERE IS NO OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER). IF YOU BELIEVE THAT A "LEAK STORY OF THIS CHARACTER WOULD CAUSE UNUSUAL DAMAGE AT THIS POINT, I WILL NEED A MESSAGE POINTING OUT TO RIFAI THE DANGERS. RIFAI CLEARLY

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BELIEVES THAT THE "LEAK" STORIES IN WASHINGTON ARE NOT INNOCENT ON OUR PART AND THAT THE LEAST HE CAN DO HERE TO MAINTAIN INTERNAL CREDIBILITY IS TO DO THE SAME THING HIMSELF, PRESUMABLY ON THE BASIS THAT WE CAN TELL CONGRESS AND OTHERS PRIVATELY THAT SUCH STORIES DO NOT REPRESENT OFFICIAL JORDANIAN VIEWS AS CONVEYED TO US. IF WE CAN LIVE WITH THIS SORT OF APPROACH, WITHOUT HAVING TO MAKE ANOTHER PUBLIC STATEMENT ON OUR PART POSSIBLY ON MONDAY,

THEN I BELIEVE RIFAI WOULD FEEL THE SITUATION HAS REACHED ACCEPT-
ABLE EQUILIBRIUM. YOUR ASSESSMENT OF THIS SITUATION
WILL BE MOST IMPORTANT, PARTICULARLY IF YOU WOULD LIKE
ME TO HAVE ANOTHER TRY WITH RIFAI. I DON'T HOLD OUT
MUCH HOPE NOW IN PULLING HIM OFF THIS POSITION, EVEN WITH A
HIGH LEVEL MESSAGE FROM WASHINGTON WHICH WOULD BY ALL MEANS
HAVE THE MOST CHANCE OF SUCCESS. IF A SUNDAY STORY WILL
HURT WITH CONGRESS ON MONDAY WHEN WE UNDERSTAND CURRENT
TWENTY-DAY PERIOD EXPIRES, THERE IS SLIGHTLY MORE
CHANCE IN GETTING RIFAI TO PUT OFF THIS SORT OF REPLY
WHICH IS BEING MADE ONLY "FOR THE LOCAL RECORD" UNTIL MONDAY
MORNING LOCAL TIME.
PICKERING

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